

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

1.—RARITY OF MAN-EATING TIGERS IN SOUTH INDIA.

In your April 1945 number Lt.-Col. E. O'Brien raises a question which has puzzled many. Why are Man-eaters so rare in South India?

There have been, and may still be, many man-eating tigers in the Ganjam District, of course, and part of this district is south of a line drawn due east from Bombay. Vizagapatam District has had its man-eaters, and also other parts of the 'Agency Tracts'.

The Nallamallais, Kurnool District, provided the man-eating tigress shot eventually at Diguvametta by the then Conservator of Forests in September 1923. She preyed upon the luckless railway gangmen; and this habit brought about her death. The Conservator was told to walk along the railway embankment keeping a sharp lookout on both sides. He soon spotted the tigress making for a culvert ahead of him. He walked towards the culvert, and then over to the other side of the embankment: and stopped. The tigress, misjudging his position, popped up ahead; and received her quietus. She was in good condition, but carried an old scar.

A man-eater roamed the Baragur Hills, to the east of the Biligirirangans (Coimbatore District), some 30 to 35 years ago; killing people spasmodically—about 4 or 5 a year. A Government Notification offering a reward for the brute described it as 'Ashy-grey, and somewhat stout'! It was said to have been shot by a poacher: if so it was quickly succeeded by another man-eater (not an unusual case) which also killed humans at infrequent intervals from Talamalai north-eastwards to Madeswaram-malai and Ponnachi (Kollegal Taluk, Coimbatore District). Lt.-Col. R. E. Wright and I went after this tiger, reputed to have a kink in its tail. One night our camp was pitched in a field at the western foot of the Baragurs, an ill-chosen spot infested with masses of hairy-caterpillars. We went to sleep in two small tents facing each other, with a 'Petromax' lantern burning between the tents; and loaded rifles by our cots. I was awakened at midnight by a horrified yell from R.E.W. and rushing out, collided with him; on which he collapsed with laughter. Half-asleep he had imagined seeing a large form stealthily moving into his tent; it turned out to be the shadow cast by the petrol lamp on the wall of the tent, of a large caterpillar crawling over his bed clothes!

Now this tiger *was* shot by a poacher. Sallying forth after deer in the early morning he met the tiger round a corner, fired his muzzle loader at it, dropped the gun and fled like the wind. Later in the morning a Forest Guard and his watcher, on beat duty, came on the dead tiger, and recognized it as the man-eater. The gun was also recognized by the watcher who named its owner. So a bargain was struck. The poacher was told that he would not be reported for being in the Reserve Forest with an

unlicensed gun, provided the Forest Guard was given the skin and skull of the tiger. This was gladly agreed to by the poacher who had no idea that the tiger was a notified man-eater, with a reward of Rs. 300 on its head. The F. G. then proceeded to claim the reward, producing the skin and skull in the local Katchery together with a wonderful story of how he had killed the tiger single handed sitting up for it over a jungle path. The reward was about to be paid when the watcher learned that the F.G. intended to give him a mere pittance of the total. So the watcher then 'blew the gaff'. The only party to benefit was an unkind Government who, while pardoning the poacher for his activities, confiscated his gun and paid out no reward—the F.G. being sacked, and the tiger's skin and skull retained in the Katchery.

In more recent times, two years ago in fact, a tiger killed four or five people at the western foot of the Billigirirangans (Mysore District) and was finally shot by officials. Earlier this year a tiger killed three persons in the Talavadi firka, Gobichetty-palayam Taluk, and was finally shot in Mysore territory.

The foregoing still does not explain why there are fewer man-eaters in South India—but I think the answer possibly lies in a combination of circumstances. Continued existence of man-eaters in an area where both game animals and cattle exist in insufficient numbers, and where tiger are forced to remain instead of emigrating to more fruitful parts—as in the case of Ganjam for example. Sanderson's description of the Honganur (Mysore District) man-eating tigress (in his 'Thirteen Years among the Wild Beasts of India'), which he finally shot, is an example of the vice picked up by a tigress to provide easy food for her cubs in all probability. It is a recognised fact that the villagers and jungle tribes of South India have not got the 'guts' of those of Central and North India. They are less inclined to stand their ground on the appearance of tiger after their cattle, and in the proximity of a tigress with cubs. This I think, has resulted in more herdsmen and villagers being killed by tiger, or tigresses (so attaining an inherited taste for humans), in the Central and Northern parts of India.

HÖNNAMETTI ESTATE,
ATTIKAN P.O.,
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2.—MAN-EATERS IN THE DARRANG DISTRICT, ASSAM

During the past two or three years nearly 50 people have been killed and eaten in this district. A kill would take place and when next heard of, the tiger would be a distance of nearly 10 miles away making it very difficult to bring the animal or (animals) as turned out to be, to bag.

A man was killed one evening and the next morning the villagers reported that the tiger was in their *bari*. On arrival at